

Parent Blocks

NEWSLETTER



"Providing resources to parents throughout West Virginia"
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Toothbrushing Tips for Your Child with a Disability

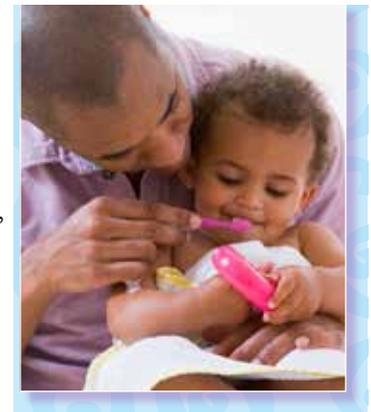


School readiness begins with health!

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Some children with disabilities need extra help to take care of their teeth. Young children, especially those with a physical, emotional, behavioral, intellectual, or communication disability, may or may not



have the fine motor skills they need to clean their teeth well. It's important to brush and help your child with toothbrushing.

Continued on next page

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Tips for brushing your child's teeth and making it a good experience:

- **Choose a toothbrush made for children.** Look for toothbrushes with soft bristles and a small head made for brushing a child's teeth. Let your child pick a toothbrush that is a favorite color. Or let your child pick one that has a favorite character on the handle.
- **Use oral hygiene aids.** If it is hard for your child to hold a toothbrush, look for a toothbrush with a thick handle, or make the handle thicker by putting it inside a tennis ball. The toothbrush handle can also be strapped to your child's hand with a hair band or Velcro. Another way is to place a hand over the child's hand to guide the toothbrush as the child brushes.
- **Use fluoride toothpaste that your child likes.** Fluoride toothpaste comes in different flavors and colors. Find one that your child likes and feels good in his or her mouth.
- **Use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste.** An adult should always place toothpaste on the toothbrush. For children under age 3, use a smear (size of a grain of rice) of toothpaste. For children ages 3 to 6, use a pea-size amount of toothpaste. Encourage your child to spit and not swallow the remaining toothpaste.
- **Make toothbrushing fun.** Sing a song while brushing your child's teeth. Or count or say the alphabet while you brush your child's teeth. You can also tell a story, say a nursery rhyme, or make animal sounds while brushing.



Use a smear for children under age 3.



Use a pea-size amount for children ages 3 to 6.

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ORAL HEALTH



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

Tips for Families from the Head Start National Center on Health

You Can Promote Good Oral Health By:

- Knowing how to make sure you and your family have healthy mouths and teeth
- Helping your children learn good mouth and teeth habits

Why Is It Important?

When Children Have a Healthy Mouth, They:

- Can speak clearly
- Can eat healthy foods
- Feel good about themselves

Having a Healthy Mouth Also Means:

- Healthy growth and development
- Being able to focus and learn
- A pain-free mouth
- Lower dental care costs for your family



Things You Can Do to Help Your Child

- Brush your child's teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day.
- If your child is younger than 3 years, brush with a smear of fluoride toothpaste.
- If your child is age 3 to 6 years, brush with a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Young children will want to brush their own teeth, but they need help until their hand skills are better. Brush children's teeth or help children brush their teeth until they are about 7 or 8 years old.
- Be a role model for oral health! Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day (in the morning and at bedtime) and floss once a day.
- Serve healthy meals and snacks like fruits, vegetables, low-fat milk and milk products, whole-grain products, meat, fish, chicken, eggs, and beans.
- Limit the number of snacks your child has in a day.
- Do not give your child food for rewards.
- Take your child to the dentist for a check up by her first birthday and keep taking her.
- If your child has not gone to the dentist take him.
- Ask your dentist what you can do to keep your mouth and your child's mouth healthy.
- Make sure to go to the dentist as often as your dentist would like you to go.
- Let your Head Start or Early Head Start program know if you need help or have questions about oral health.



Questions to Ask When Looking for a Dental Office

Finding a dental office that is best for you and your child can be hard. Here are some questions that you can ask a dental office before you decide to make an appointment.

1. Does someone in your office speak _____ (for example, Spanish) that can translate?
2. Does your office take _____ (your child's insurance plan, for example, Medicaid or CHIP)?
3. Is your office now seeing new patients with this type of insurance? When is the next appointment time for a new patient?
4. Do the dentist and staff have any special training or experience treating young children?
5. Are there books, toys, or other fun things for children to do while they sit in the waiting room in your office?
6. Where is the office located, and does any public transportation (for example, bus or train) stop nearby? *Note:* Head Start and some dental offices can help find a ride to and from the dental office.
7. When is your office open during the day? Is the office open any evenings or on weekends?
8. To prepare for the appointment, what information will I need to know to complete your paperwork? Do I have to bring any forms with me to the dental appointment (for example, an insurance card or a Head Start dental form)?
9. What usually happens during a new patient appointment?
10. Will my child need to come back for more appointments if the dentist finds a cavity?
11. If an emergency comes up and I can't bring my child in for the appointment, what should I do?
12. Ask this question if your child has a health problem or needs extra help (for example, autism, cerebral palsy, asthma, epilepsy, or diabetes). My child has _____. Has the dentist or office staff worked with children who have this condition?



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